

Information Item

Status of the Delta Plan Amendment Regarding Conveyance, Storage Systems, and the Operation of Both

Summary: Staff will summarize the input and comments received from Council members and the public at the February Council meeting and proposed edits to the discussion draft language in response to those comments. Staff also will summarize comments from the public workshops held in March and seek input from the Council on potential revisions to the draft amendment, based on those comments.

Background

At the Feb. 23, 2017 Council meeting, staff presented the discussion draft to the Delta Plan regarding Delta conveyance, storage systems, and the operation of both. The staff presentation provided background on efforts leading to the development of the draft amendment, including development and adoption of the 19 Principles for Water Conveyance in 2015. The staff presentation also included a review of the organization of the discussion draft and a brief summary of next steps, including then-upcoming public workshops and issuance of a California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) Notice of Preparation (NOP) of the Environmental Impact Report (EIR). At that meeting, the Council provided comments to staff to help refine the draft amendment.

Following the February Council meeting, Council staff held three workshops to hear additional public comments. One issue raised in the workshops involved the public's concern that the Council would, through a vote in the near future, identify—too early—the proposed Delta Plan amendment as the preferred alternative. Staff wants to clarify that future action by the Council will not be a project approval, but will consist of providing direction to staff about the project description (proposed project to be analyzed in the EIR) which, under CEQA, is a required part of an EIR. (CEQA Guidelines section 15124.) The EIR will also analyze a reasonable range of alternatives, be subject to a public comment period, hearing, and issuance of a final EIR as required by CEQA (see CEQA Guidelines section 15126.6.). No final action will be taken by the Council until environmental review is complete.

Today's Briefing

The purpose of today's presentation is to discuss proposed revisions to the discussion draft amendment to the Delta Plan for Delta Conveyance, Storage Systems, and the Operation of Both, based on input and comments received from the Council during last month's Council meeting. Staff will also summarize the comments received during three public workshops that were held in early March and seek input from the Council regarding these comments.

Response to Comments Received During February 2017 Council Meeting

During the February Council meeting, Council members provided extensive input and comments on the discussion draft. The comments addressed several themes such as:

- *Strengthen the Narrative* – Several Council members suggested that the amendment be a document that provides enough background and context to inform the reader on the issues that the amendment addresses.
- *Balanced Tone* – Several Council members mentioned that the tone of the discussion draft did not appear to be balanced and overemphasized water supply reliability.
- *Better Connect the Recommendations to Issues in the Problem Statement* – Council members commented that the recommended options should have a stronger connection to the issues that were defined in the problem statement.
- *Improve Consistency between Amendment and other Existing Delta Plan Policies and Recommendations* – Council members suggested that staff ensure that the proposed amendment language be consistent with existing Delta Plan policies and recommendations.
- *Explain How Options Were Selected* – Council members suggested that the discussion draft improve its description of how options were evaluated and selected for promotion.
- *Include Historical Analysis and Process on Options Evaluated to Date* – Council members recommended better describing staff's reliance on the substantial time and effort put forth on the development and analysis of options for conveyance, storage systems, and the operation of both.

In response to the Council's comments, the following categories of revisions are proposed for the next version of the discussion draft:

- Revisions to the problem statement to tie more directly the options and characteristics presented in the recommendations;
- Revisions to the introduction to describe the historical context and summarize the timeline of prior storage and conveyance efforts, as well as to reference other Delta Plan policies and recommendations relevant to this amendment;
- Revisions throughout to present a more balanced tone with respect to the coequal goals; and
- Edits to respond to specific Council member comments throughout the document.

Summary of Public Workshops

In early March, three workshops were held to engage with the public and receive input on the discussion draft. The workshops were held in the southern Delta, Southern California, and Sacramento. At the workshops, attendees were given a brief presentation on the discussion draft amendment. Workshop participants were then asked if the problem statement captured the issues and conflicts related to Delta conveyance, storage systems, and the operation of both, as well as their thoughts on how well the options promoted in the amendment addressed the problem statements. A summary of the comments will be presented at the Council meeting as well as options for potential revisions in response to the comments.

Next Steps

Anticipated next steps for this effort include:

1. On March 16, 2017, the Council issued an NOP of the EIR, and will hold a scoping meeting during the 30-day comment period on March 24, 2017 in Sacramento. The purpose of the scoping meeting is to receive comments from agencies and the public on the scope and content of the environmental information in the EIR.
2. Council staff also anticipates presenting a draft of the amendment to the Delta Independent Science Board in April or May for its input/review.
3. Based on the input received at today's Council meeting, the comments received during the three public workshops, comment letters submitted to the Council, and comments received during the scoping process, staff will develop another discussion draft.
4. Ultimately, staff will ask the Council to approve a proposed project description consisting of amendment language for Delta Conveyance, Storage Systems, and the Operation of Both, in order to trigger the environmental review effort described above. The Council-approved language will be analyzed along with a reasonable range of alternatives in the EIR that will be prepared for all of the proposed Delta Plan Amendments (i.e., Delta Levee Investment and Risk Reduction Strategy; Delta Conveyance, Storage, and Operation; and Performance Measures).

Fiscal Information

Not applicable.

List of Attachments

No attachments.

Agenda Item: 11
Meeting Date: March 23, 2017
Page 4

Contact

Anthony Navasero
Senior Engineer

Phone: (916) 445-5471

874111.2